

Ayonika lets gold slip, Rio quota brings consolation

Ayonika Paul wins silver and quota place for 2016 Rio Olympic Games. First shooter from Lakshya Shooting Club at the Olympics. When Suma did it Lakshya had still not formed.

Today Ayonika shot 416.6 in the Asia Olympic Qualifiers in women's air Rifle and won Silver. This is a great achievement for our club and Suma. She and Ayonika deserve this hour of pride...

Suma is Ayonika's personal coach and she has been training with Suma for almost a year now.

Suma had reached the finals at Athens Olympics in 2004. Then she founded the Lakshya Shooting Club in 2006 with an aim to produce more Olympic medal winners. Today it is a proud day for her. Especially when she has played an important impartial role in supporting a junior colleague in spite of being in the Olympic reckoning till 9 months back.

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SILVER LINING Indian shooter finishes second as Iran's Najmeh Khedmati bags gold medal



India's Ayonika Paul believes she surrendered the top prize in the 10 metre air rifle event to Iran's Najmeh Khedmati on Friday in the Asia Olympics qualifying competition.

By Rav Choudhary / HT PHOTO

RESULTS
50 metre pistol men's
 1. Tomoyuki Matsuda, 2. Kim Song Guk, 3. Kim Jong Suk
10m air pistol women's
 1. Najmeh Khedmati (IRI), 2. Ayonika Paul (IND), Pooja Ghatak (IND)

NEW DELHI: Ayonika Paul was upset over letting slip the opportunity to win gold in the women's 10 metre air rifle event in the Asia Olympics qualifying competition. According to her, she surrendered the top prize to Iran's Najmeh Khedmati in the final two shots.

Ayonika's last shot was a dismal 9 which meant she was tied at 205.9 with the Iranian. A similar shot in the tie shoot saw her finish with silver. Her second-place finish still brought cheer as it ensured India were awarded a quota for the Rio Olympics.

A similar error ruined Pooja Ghatak's chances as she crashed out of reckoning for gold after scoring a disappointing 8, and slipped to third from the top spot.

"I wanted to win. I wanted gold no matter what I could have executed my last two shots better. I am disappointed," said Ayonika, adding, "I am smiling now but the last two shots are still playing on the mind."

With coach Suma Shirur by her side, Ayonika plans to correct the flaws that cost her the gold medal. She qualified third for the final after collecting 416.6 during the qualifications round, while Pooja was fifth with a total of 415.6 points. The third Indian in the fray, Elizabeth Susan Koshy, finished 13th with 413.6. Seven of the eight final-

ists were in reckoning for the Olympic berth, but India could get only one as Apurvi Chandela had logged one last year in the discipline.

Pooja set the pace early on as she jumped into the lead straightaway by logging 10.7 with her first shot. Ayonika floundered on her first shot with a lowly 8.8, but thereafter began her ascent to the podium. By the sixth shot, she was second, and was in the lead by the 11th.

The quota was in the bag when only four shooters were left after the ejection of Singapore's Xiu Yi Ho. South Korea's Eunsoo Lee was awarded the second quota up for grabs.

In the other event of the day, Omkar Singh finished fourth in 50m pistol. Jai Singh was placed 27th and the quota winner from India in this event, Prakash Nanjappa, was placed 30th after totalling 534 in the qualification round.

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